

OLDBERG (O.)

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

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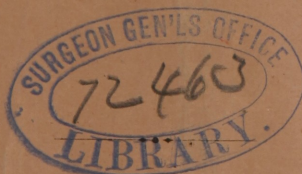
IN THE

National College of Pharmacy,

CITY OF WASHINGTON,

BY

PROF. OSCAR OLDBERG.



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WASHINGTON, D. C.:

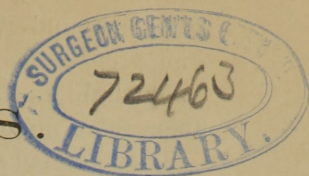
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1873.

"The pharmacists of Washington, D. C., are about to start a college, but rather ridiculously propose to name it the "NATIONAL COLLEGE OF PHARMACY." In view of the *small* number of its members, present and prospective, as well as the *limited* number of students who are likely to attend its instruction, it is *absurd* to style it "National." We trust the trustees will avoid the misnomer, and designate it as the "Washington College of Pharmacy."—*Druggists' Circular*, December, 1872.

***** "A *local* society of the national capital has no more claim to be considered *national* than an association located in the remotest corner of the United States." *****—*American Journal of Pharmacy*, November, 1872.

ADDRESS.



GENTLEMEN : Being a member of this college, and one of its many godfathers, I trust that I may be pardoned if I indulge too lengthily in a prefatory, apparently impertinent to my chair, for I assure you that whatever I shall say is prompted by a real exultation at the birth of the "National College of Pharmacy."

Thanks to the energy that has of late years manifested itself in our midst, we are now beginning to have a capital, of which the whole nation might well be proud.

Washington is to our country the natural rendezvous of communicative and curious minds of all orders. People from all parts of the Union meet here continually, and men of learning, imagination, and wealth, *will* congregate here as fast as we are prepared to receive them. This cosmopolitan American capital of ours has *always* attracted visitors from the most remote corners of our country, but the trouble heretofore has been that they did not deem it profitable or pleasant to remain with us. This difficulty is now, to a great extent, remedied, and we are at last able to present such inducements as will both make the concourse greater and their stay longer. Here is the place then to compare notes, and our city will eventually become the intellectual and educational, as well as the political, center of our land. In fact, gentlemen, I can see no reason why we should not act upon that proposition *now*.

The step-motherly treatment that our city has received at the hands of our fellow-citizens throughout the States, is as proverbial as it is inconsistent. They have chided us because we did not, *in our sweat*, improve the common prop-

erty, surround the *public* buildings with splendid avenues, and prepare for *them* a city in which they may take pride and delight, until we have returned good for evil, and brought them to an inglorious surrender withal.

They berated *us* because the capital of the nation was not what *they* would have it, because it was not worthy of the nation, because it had no attractions, but especially because it had no national institutions of any kind save the governmental departments. They expected to find at Washington not only such advantages as they had been accustomed to in their respective States, but above all everything that they did *not* have themselves. And why? Because, as they have repeatedly told us, the capital of the nation *ought* to have such institutions.

When Pericles, the Greek, was accused by his countrymen of squandering the public money on those noble national edifices, of which Athens afterwards boasted, he offered to execute them at his own expense provided the people would suffer him to inscribe *his* name on them instead of *theirs*. We do not wonder that the Athenians keenly felt the rebuke. But what are *we* to say, who have singlehanded undertaken to provide for *our* exacting countrymen without experiencing a sign of encouragement, or *claiming a tittle of the honor for ourselves!* Let us tell them that we have ceased to be sensible to their unjust reproaches, but that we still have faith in the future, and in the generous national pride that lies at the bottom of the American heart, well knowing that *the loudest are the least generous*.

It is, indeed, our duty (no less than our privilege) to profit by the sneers of the uncharitable, and so manage, that, in the future, all our institutions may partake of the nationalism of the city itself. They must not—nay, *cannot* be sectional to succeed. And to say that the people of the District of Columbia do not appreciate their privilege in this respect is an accusation much too jejune to be made in earnest.

Thus it is eminently proper that the National College of

Pharmacy, situated at the National Capital, should make bold to compete with its older sisters *without a churlish thought of unworthy contention.*

Then let us strive to make our institution worthy of its title and its seat; and since we have *planted* our banner may we be true to it!

Harmony in purpose and action have already been exhibited in a degree that affords ample encouragement, and I trust that the *students*, no less than the members and the professors, will take due pride in this our joint concern.

To the students I would first point out the nature of our profession, and the stumbling blocks in the practice of Pharmacy and its study.

The honor and responsibility of ushering you into the hall of *Æsculapius*, whose vestibule perhaps all of you have already entered, has, by the voice of the honorable gentlemen who compose the Board of Trustees of the National College of Pharmacy, fallen upon your speaker. This honor, it is my belief, might with greater justice have been conferred upon one more deserving, for there is among us a very considerable number of excellent pharmacists, whose wider experience and older years and reputation far outweigh mine. But these, gentlemen, will render the College valuable service in other ways not less effectual and necessary.

In accepting the *honor*, I fully appreciate the *responsibility* of the charge, for upon the character of our studies will your future success and reputation in the practice of your profession in a great measure depend.

Ours is a calling, the weight of which increases with a better knowledge of it, and the intelligent and conscientious pharmacist grows more and more apprehensive of the dangers that surround him with each year spent behind the dispensing counter. After twelve years of active experience in the practice, I have found myself far less easy of mind in the performance of its serious duties than when a senior appren-

tice of but two years' qualification. How important, then, to prepare ourselves well for our duties, and to arrange and prosecute our studies in such a manner that they may afterwards be conducive to practical service as a safe-guard against pharmaceutical, or, rather, anti-pharmaceutical, manslaughter.

Without inclination to discourage you, I cannot too deeply impress upon your mind the gravity of the step you have taken when you chose to follow this business. It behooves your teacher, therefore, to advise you, at the very *entrance*, of the difficulties to be surmounted in the practice of that profession which you propose to make your future concern. It would ill befit me to conceal from your heed the often calamitous consequences of putting aside, even in apparently trifling operations, the watchful care and presence of mind which should attend *your* vocation above any other. And I would *admonish* you to practice, in your studies—and, indeed, in all your habits—that reflectiveness and care, without which none of you need expect either proficiency or its inherent reward.

Mark well! Those among you who will exhibit the greatest attentiveness and earnest in their studies, *they* may also reckon upon the largest share of success in business; for, while it rarely happens that habitual carelessness at college is subsequently metamorphosed into a judicious solicitude, the reverse is still *more* exceptional. And besides the waste of time and loss of opportunities that result from a wanton disregard for the necessity of early application and ambition, the culpable recklessness of entering upon a function where the health and happiness—aye, the very lives of our fellow-men are concerned, with the expectation of an easy and comfortable access to a careless, if not an ample livelihood, is fraught with the direst peril, and almost inevitably followed by a miserable disappointment. Let us hope that among our number there is none who takes his responsibility lightly.

The opinion, entertained by many young practitioners, that book-knowledge will suffice to save them from the danger of being wrecked on the sunken rocks, is a precarious hypothesis. To the skillful navigator, courage, caution, presence of mind, and experience in the practical details of seamanship, are as indispensable as the knowledge of the compass.

It is well that you should consider the nature and extent of your obligations, and prepare yourselves for a troublesome journey before you will have entered upon the macadamized road of experience. A blunder made by a medical practitioner may be checked and corrected by an intelligent pharmacist, but pharmaceutical blunders are seldom detected until too late.

But with all its responsibility, the practice of pharmacy does not lack its rewards.

Every occupation in life has its dark shadings, and no *one* will seem tolerable if we incline toward discontentedness. But if we take ever so little pains to examine into the nature of our every day duties, we will find ample opportunities of improvement, and that is the secret of advancement, and never fails to preserve that elasticity of body and mind which reconciles us to ourselves, and makes our duties pleasurable.

The consciousness of mastership is no mean comfort. Then, let us ever aim at excellency in whatever we undertake, and persevere till we arrive at it; and while we are striving to be useful members of the community, by doing our part *well*, we will assuredly find much of our prosy drudgery changed into welcome diversions.

To the ignorant and slovenly there are no charms in any employment, but it does not require any degree of perspicacity to discover that Pharmacy is brimful of novelties to the intelligent observer. It is truly a business that one might well take pride in who understands it. Look back upon the whole history of human inquiry into the laws of relation be-

tween matter and matter, and you may readily learn that, in the gradual development of the grand science of Chemistry the most numerous contributions and the most valuable discoveries were made in the laboratories of our predecessors. And as the Science of Chemistry was born of Pharmaceutical experimentation, so have many of the most famous chemists of the past century sprung from the ranks of the inquisitive apothecaries. Berzelius, Scheele, Liebig, Mohr, Hoffman, Soubeiran, and a host of others distinguished in that field of limitless research were all initiated into the art and mysteries of Pharmacy, and received their earliest precepts in Chemistry from practising pharmacists. An art which is thus capable of stimulating a bent for rational inquiry cannot fail to be intensely interesting to all who really desire to acquaint themselves *well* with its nice points and conditions of success. And let *no* one suppose that our business depends merely upon the art of buying and selling.

The time has *come* when we will be able to assert our title to respectful recognition from the public. The number of American colleges of Pharmacy is on the increase, and it is well worth noticing that they are all supported by the exertions and contributions of older practitioners rather than by the number of their students. I am not aware that any of these institutions, with the exception, perhaps, of one, are self-sustaining, but they flourish nevertheless. The province of these colleges is to establish a comprehensive standard of education in our corps. And if we earnestly labor for the maintenance of our cause, the people will not fail to appreciate our endeavors; and when we shall have succeeded in creating that just appreciation, the legitimate culmination of which is a *demand* for that standard, then, gentlemen, will our legislators grant us such protection as will fortify our position and, henceforth, render systematic education compulsory to pharmacists as well as to physicians. It lies wholly with ourselves to make our profession as respected as it is respectable.

With regard to the steady advancement of our art itself, it is very gratifying to us, that our Pharmacopœia is everywhere acknowledged to be at least equal to any other. The Pharmacopœias of Great Britain, France, Prussia, together with our own, are unquestionably among the best works of the kind extant. And the free competition which *we* enjoy under our democratic institutions, is a guarantee that we will not want opportunity to improve. Let us only have a legal standard of qualification, and let every one so qualified practise if he will, and it is not difficult to predict gratifying results. But let us avoid the extremes.

The National College of Pharmacy will accomplish much if its *students* assist by a laudable ambition. Let us earnestly co-operate with each other in our studies. Never hesitate to ask your professor or each other when in doubt; and if any of you discover anything new or useful, or have a suggestion to make, let us have the benefit of it, and we will then soon judge of its merit.

It has been well said, "You are not the right man for your place if you are not too large for it." This is an excellent motto worthy of your adoption. Make your standard high. Be not content with a bare competency enabling you to do again what others have done before you a thousand times over, but aim at *improvement*. If you cannot better your profession, you are not fit for it.

The first article of the Code of Ethics of this College is presented to you as an introductory to our creed. It reads as follows: "We consider Pharmacy as an important scientific profession, of which we strive to be worthy members."

Proprietors and employers should cheerfully submit to giving their employees who desire to avail themselves of the lectures, ample time to *study* as well as to visit the lecture room at the appointed hours, and I see no reason why clerks and apprentices should not be free from their shop duties three evenings each week, so that there may be no inclina-

tion on the part of students to employ the lecture hours in taking necessary recreation.

And as the lectures, by the provisions of the constitution of the college, are at all times free to its members, we hope always to have an audience, large and critical, which will reflect credit on the institution no less than on its faculty; and I would for my part gladly be one of the listeners myself were it not my duty to respond to the call of the college, and as far as my ability and earnest intentions permit, in obedience to their desire, do the piloting and assist my fellow students, occasionally giving advice or taking it, as the case might be.

